

§0.468

fee is based on the pay grade level of the FCC's employee(s) who conduct(s) the search or review, or the actual hourly rate of FCC contractors or other non-FCC personnel who conduct a search.

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (a)(1): The fees for FCC employees will be modified periodically to correspond with modifications in the rate of pay approved by Congress and any such modifications will be announced by public notice and will be posted on the Commission's Web site, <http://www.fcc.gov/foia/#feeschedule>.

(2) The fees specified in paragraph (a)(1) of this section are computed at Step 5 of each grade level based on the General Schedule and include twenty percent for personnel benefits. Search and review fees will be assessed in ¼ hour increments.

(b) Search fees may be assessed for time spent searching, even if the Commission fails to locate responsive records or if any records located are determined to be exempt from disclosure.

(c) The Commission shall charge only for the initial review, *i.e.*, the review undertaken initially when the Commission analyzes the applicability of a specific exemption to a particular record. The Commission shall not charge for review at the appeal level of an exemption already applied. However, records or portions of records withheld in full under an exemption that is subsequently determined not to apply may be reviewed again to determine the applicability of other exemptions not previously considered. The costs of such a subsequent review, under these circumstances, are properly assessable.

(d) The fee charged will not exceed an amount based on the time typically required to locate records of the kind requested.

(e)(1) If the Commission estimates that search charges are likely to exceed the greater of \$25 or the amount which the requester indicated he/she is prepared to pay, then it shall notify the requester of the estimated amount of fees. Such a notice shall offer the requester the opportunity to confer with Commission personnel with the object of revising or clarifying the request. See §0.465(c)(2) and §470(d).

(2) The time for processing a request for inspection shall be tolled while con-

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ferring with the requester about his or her willingness to pay the fees required to process the request. See §0.461(e).

(f) When the search has been completed, the custodian of the records will give notice of the charges incurred to the person who made the request.

(g) The fee shall be paid to the Financial Management Division, Office of Managing Director, or as otherwise directed by the Commission.

(h) Records shall be inspected within seven days after notice is given that they have been located and are available for inspection. See §0.461(n). After that period, they will be returned to storage, and additional charges may be imposed for again producing them.

§0.468 Interest.

Interest shall be charged those requesters who fail to pay the fees charged. The agency will begin assessing interest charges on the amount billed starting on the 31st day following the day on which the billing was sent. The date on which the payment is received by the agency will determine whether and how much interest is due. The interest shall be set at the rate prescribed in 31 U.S.C. 3717.

§0.469 Advance payments.

(a) The Commission may not require advance payment of estimated FOIA fees except as provided in paragraph (b) or where the Commission estimates or determines that allowable charges that a requester may be required to pay are likely to exceed \$250.00 and the requester has no history of payment. Where allowable charges are likely to exceed \$250.00 and the requester has a history of prompt payment of FOIA fees the Commission may notify the requester of the estimated cost and obtain satisfactory assurance of full payment. Notification that fees may exceed \$250.00 is not, however, a prerequisite for collecting fees above that amount.

(b) Where a requester has previously failed to pay a fee charged in a timely fashion (*i.e.*, within 30 days of the date of the billing), the Commission may require the requester to pay the full amount owed plus any applicable interest as provided in §0.468, and to make an advance payment of the full amount